

## INTRODUCTION

Most problems facing the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine (A/P) system arise directly or indirectly from human activity. Many different human activities interact directly with the A/P system. Many of these activities (e.g., agriculture, commercial forestry, waste disposal, residential and commercial development, mining and industrial development, and national defense) **affect** water quality and the natural resources. Other activities (e.g., commercial fishing, sports fishing, recreation and tourism, and wildlife habitat) are adversely **affected by** degraded water quality. Pressures on the system from these activities will continue to increase as a result of future population growth and economic development.

Technical solutions to many land use and water quality problems affecting the A/P system are available, but obstacles exist to their implementation. For example, many obstacles tend to be institutional or human-related (i.e., socio-economic). The public may have little understanding of or appreciation for the complexity of most water quality problems and land use issues. This is particularly true for nonpoint source water pollution, where numerous, unrelated land use decisions can have significant adverse impacts on the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine system. Also public policies and institutions may not always be effective, efficient, and equitable in their attempts to manage natural resources.

Increased public awareness and positive public attitudes will be necessary to improve water quality and protect habitat, because citizens must be willing to support and pay for management programs. Resource managers and political leaders need to understand the attitudes of a broad, representative sample of the public, including those citizens who have not been involved in the Albemarle-Pamlico Estuarine Study's public meetings or citizen's advisory committees. Successful resource management will require strong support from different segments of the public, including elected and appointed public officials. Such support will best be achieved by understanding public attitudes and knowledge.

This study uses a combination of social science research methods to analyze a wide range of attitudes and beliefs regarding the natural resources of the A/P system. The information in this report was collected in a scientific telephone survey of 1,133 people selected at random from across the entire state of North Carolina, as well as the Virginia portion of the A/P Study area. We also present results of a mail survey that was completed by a sample of 662 public officials from across North Carolina. The support of each group is critical to accomplishing the ultimate goals of effective management.

This work should enhance the understanding and appreciation of the complex nature of public attitudes by resource managers, political leaders, and concerned citizens. In addition, this work should help build support for the goals of the A/P Study by identifying educational needs. Survey research can also provide a credible means